



damselfly

representative species

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Insecta
Order: Odonata

Features

Damselflies undergo incomplete metamorphosis (egg, nymph, adult). They have changed very little in the past 300 million years, except for a decrease in size. The nymph is one-half to two inches long and has six thin, hooked legs and large, compound eyes. The lower lip of the nymph is double-hinged with grasping pincers at the end. The long, thin, green or brown nymph body has three leaflike gills at the end of the abdomen. The adult has a very long, thin abdomen. Two pairs of wings, similar in size and shape, are held upright at rest. The colorful body may be green, blue, or red. Large, compound eyes are present. The mouthparts are for chewing. Adults may be up to two inches long, depending on the species.

Natural History

Damselfly nymphs are aquatic, living in ponds and streams. Adults are found near ponds, marshes, lake shores, and slow-moving streams. The nymph eats mollusks (snails, slugs, and others), insects, crustaceans, worms, and even small fish. The adult is a predator of insects. When mating, the male damselfly grabs the female behind her head with a pair of pincers located at the tip of his abdomen. The pair fly hooked together in this manner for several

hours. The male can remove other male's sperm from the female before mating with her. The female deposits eggs on top of the water. Eggs drift to the bottom.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; wet prairies and fens; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.